IN THE CLAIMS:

1.   (Original) A music distribution method for downloading, in response to a request from a user, music data for one or more musical pieces included in the latest hit charts from a server storing a lot of music data, comprising the steps of:

     determining whether music data to be downloaded from said server are already stored in a terminal of said user; and

     downloading, from said server to said terminal, only music data that are not stored in said terminal.

2.   (Currently amended) The music distribution method according to claim 1, comprising the additional steps, performed prior to said determining step, of accessing a list of musical pieces included in a latest hits chart and indicating songs wherein the music data to be downloaded are those which are ranked at the first to predetermined places on said latest hit charts and not stored in said terminal as said music data to be downloaded.

3.   (Currently amended) The music distribution method according to claim 1 or 2, further comprising the steps of:

     downloading a latest hit charts list including places, titles and singer names to said terminal from said server; and

     updating a hit charts list of the user stored in said terminal based on said latest hit charts list.

4.   (Currently amended) The music distribution method according to one of claims 1 to 3, further comprising the step of deleting music data that are stored in said terminal and are not included in said latest hit charts.

5.   (Currently amended) The music distribution method according to claim 3 or 4, wherein said step of determining whether music data to be downloaded from said server are already stored in a terminal of said user includes the step of comparing the titles of

musical pieces on said latest hit charts list with those on said hit charts list held in said user terminal.

6.   (Original) The music distribution method according to claim 5, wherein said step of determining whether music data to be downloaded from said server are already stored in a terminal of said user includes the step of transmitting said hit charts list of said user to said server, which then performs said step of comparing the titles or musical pieces on said latest hit charts list with those on said hit charts list held in said user terminal.

7.   (Currently amended) The music distribution method according to one of claims 1 to 6, wherein said terminal is a personal computer.

8.   (Currently amended) The music distribution method according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said terminal is a portable terminal having a music playback function, one or more downloading terminals are connected to said server via a network, and said determining step and said downloading step are performed by connecting to said downloading terminal said portable terminal or a storage medium to be loaded in said portable terminal.

9.   (Original) The music distribution method according to claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

downloading a latest hit charts list including places, titles and singer names to said downloading terminals from said server; and

updating a hit charts list of the user stored in said portable terminal or said storage medium based on said latest hit charts list.

10.   (Original) A music distribution system comprising:

a server for storing a lot of music data; and

means responsive to a request from a user for downloading, from said server, music data for one or more musical pieces included in the latest hit charts, wherein said downloading means including:

means for determining whether music data to be downloaded from said server are already stored in a terminal of said user; and

means for selectively downloading, from said server to said terminal, only music data that are not stored in said terminal.

11. (Original) The music distribution system according to claim 10, wherein said downloading means downloads music data that are ranked at the first to predetermined places on said latest hit charts and not stored in said terminal.

12. (Currently amended) The music distribution system according to claim 10-or-11, wherein said downloading means downloads, from said server to said terminal, a latest hit charts list including places, titles and singer names, in addition to said music data.

13. (Original) The music distribution system according to claim 12, further comprising means for updating a hit charts list of the user stored in said terminal based on said latest hit charts list.

14. (Currently amended) The music distribution system according to one of claims 10-to-13, wherein said downloading means deletes music data that are stored in said terminal and are not included in said latest hit charts.

15. (Currently amended) The music distribution system according to claim 13-or-14, wherein said determining means includes means for comparing the titles of musical pieces on said latest hit charts list with those on said hit charts list of said user.

16. (Original) The music distribution system according to claim 15, wherein said determining means includes means for transmitting said hit charts list of said user to said server, and said comparing means is provided in said server.

17. (Currently amended) The music distribution system according to one of claims 10-to-16, wherein said terminal is a personal computer.

18. (Currently amended) The music distribution system according to claim 10 or 11, wherein said terminal is a portable terminal having a music playback function, one or more downloading terminals are connected to said server via a network, and said determining means and said selectively downloading means are provided in said downloading terminal to perform said determination and said selective downloading by connecting to said downloading terminal said portable terminal or a storage medium to be loaded in said portable terminal.

19. (Original) The music distribution system according to claim 18, further comprising:

means for downloading, from said server to said downloading terminals, a latest hit charts list including places, titles and singer names; and

means for updating a hit charts list of the user stored in said portable terminal or said storage medium based on said latest hit charts list.

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